

CLAIMS

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of marking an egg comprising:
5 applying radiant energy to the shell of an egg so as to cause discoloration of the eggshell, thereby forming a marking.
2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said radiant energy traces a marking selected from the group
10 consisting of text and graphics.
3. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said marking on said egg includes an advertisement.
4. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said marking on said egg includes a freshness date.
- 15 5. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said marking on said egg includes an advertisement and a freshness date.
6. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said radiant energy is applied by a laser.
- 20 7. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said step of applying radiant energy is performed so as to leave some areas of the egg shell unaffected by said radiant energy, so said marking will have contrast with said unaffected areas.
8. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said
25 markings are formed by said radiant energy source and the egg moves in a machine through a predetermined region.
9. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said marking is formed without use of a foreign material applied to the egg to form the marking.
- 30 10. A method of freshness advertising comprising:
applying an advertisement to an egg, and;
applying a freshness date to said egg.
11. The method as claimed in claim 10 wherein radiant energy is applied to the shell of an egg so as to cause a

discoloration in the eggshell and thereby forming said advertisement and said freshness date.

12. The method as claimed in claim 10 wherein said advertisement and said freshness date are applied in one
5 step.

13. Apparatus for applying markings on eggs comprising:

an egg-handling machine, and;

a radiant energy source located in proximity to
10 said egg-handling machine, said radiant energy source being adapted to apply radiant energy so that the radiant energy discolors the shell of the egg to form markings.

14. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said egg-handling machine does not include structure for applying
15 a radiant energy sensitive material to the egg.

15. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said egg-handling machine is an egg-grading machine.

16. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said radiant energy source is located such that said radiant
20 energy will be applied inline.

17. The apparatus as claimed in claim 13 wherein said radiant energy source is located such that said radiant energy will be applied offline.

18. A method of modifying an egg-handling machine
25 having a conveyance arranged to move eggs through a predetermined region, the method comprising:

arranging a radiant energy source in proximity to said egg-handling machine so that radiant energy from said source will impinge on eggs moved by said conveyance through
30 said predetermined region.

19. A method as claimed in claim 18 wherein said method is performed without adding to said egg-handling machine any apparatus for applying a radiant energy sensitive material onto the eggs.

20. An egg, having an information-bearing marking thereon, said marking being formed at least in part by discolored material of the shell of said egg.

21. The egg as claimed in claim 20 wherein said
5 marking is formed entirely by discolored material of the shell of said egg.

22. The egg as claimed in claim 20 wherein the egg is raw.

23. The egg as claimed in claim 20 wherein the egg is
10 pasteurized but not cooked.

24. The egg as claimed in claim 20 wherein the egg is hard-boiled.